



## A Chinese New Year Party - how Pier 1 of you!

So, you've already blown your New Year's resolutions and think it's too late to start again? Well, get ready for a do-over. The Chinese New Year offers 15 days of celebration and an opportunity to start fresh on all those broken resolutions.

The 2008 Chinese New Year begins on February 7 and ushers in the Year of the Earth Rat. According to Chinese astrology, those born under this sign possess a special appreciation for unexpected surprises.

There's no rule that says you have to be Chinese to celebrate this holiday filled with ancient traditions designed to bring luck in the coming year. The underlying spirit of tradition and good wishes for the coming year are universal. So out with the old (again) – time to maximize good luck with a Chinese New Year party!

### An authentic Chinese New Year party

These are some of the items you will need to bring on the luck by creating an atmosphere of color, expectation and fun.

- A "tray of togetherness" that features a combination of eight different types of candy, dried fruits and other foods
- Chinese paper lanterns
- Flowers - Peach blossoms, narcissus and chrysanthemum (faux will do just fine!)
- Red and gold paper items
- Red clothing
- Traditional Chinese food

Custom advises that you invite your guests with invitations cut in the shape of the animal that represents the current year on the Chinese calendar (the Year of the Rat, in this case). However, we suggest using evite.com – they have some very clever Chinese New Year designs – or you can create your own!

Decorate your home with Chinese decorations like paper lanterns and get out your blue and white porcelain pieces. Use red and gold to symbolize wealth and good luck, and choose floral arrangements that include peach blossoms for good luck and chrysanthemums for longevity.

Indulge in Chinese cuisine - make it potluck or order take-out. Serve your guests lucky foods such as dumplings, fish and noodles. And for goodness' sake - don't forget the fortune cookies!

Make "lucky" place settings with red or gold napkins and dinnerware. Create place cards out of red paper with the Chinese kanji (symbol) for good luck, and the guest's name printed beneath it in metallic gold ink.

Red is the traditional color of luck. Wear red and gold clothing for good fortune, and ask your guests to do the same.

Celebrate by eating, drinking and sharing good wishes for the coming year. This is where a good toast (or two – or more) comes in handy.

Create a new tradition and karaoke until the New Year arrives! Rent or purchase a small karaoke machine and CDs, or download music tracks from the Internet. Either way, get down tonight!

Host a night of Chinese martial arts movies! Put on your ninja jammies, gather your tray of togetherness and some popcorn and "wax on, wax off" with our top faves:

- **Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon (1999)** – Wow-worthy special effects and the dreamy Chow Yun-Fat.
- **The Chinese Connection (1972)** – A Bruce Lee classic.
- **Snake in the Monkey's Shadow (1982)** – This martial arts movie features the monkey style, snake style and drunken style of fighting.
- **Enter the Dragon (1973)** – Bruce Lee's most popular movie.
- **Fist of Legend (1994)** – A remake of Bruce Lee's Chinese Connection, only starring the fabulous Jet Li.
- **Drunken Master (1979)** – The movie that made Jackie Chan a star.
- **Rush Hour 1, 2 and 3 (1998, 2001 and 2007)** – You can never go wrong with a marathon of Jackie Chan movies!

Make inexpensive parting gifts for your guests out of red and gold paper bags (our Wine Bags work well too) and fill them with mandarin oranges, chocolate coins and fortune cookies. Or give them red and gold paper envelopes with a gift card or a special New Year's wish just for them – both will bring good luck.

As they depart, remember to wish your friends and family, "Gung Hay Fat Choy" – that's a traditional Chinese way to wish a Happy New Year.

### Customary ways to prepare for Chinese New Year:

- Clean your home as thoroughly as possible during the days preceding the New Year to sweep away any bad luck from the year that's ending.

- Don't clean your home during the first few days of the New Year - you don't want to risk sweeping away the good luck.
- Try to see as many of your family and friends as possible during the New Year celebration to spread good wishes for the coming year.
- Serve and eat as many lucky foods as possible during the 15 days. Some of these foods are a whole fish, noodles and mandarin oranges. If you're not adventurous enough to cook Chinese food, most Chinese restaurants offer special New Year menus.
- Don't cry on New Year's day or raise your voice to your children or you'll be setting a tone of discord for the coming year.

#### The Chinese New Year day-by-day

**Day 1:** The first day of the Lunar New Year is "the welcoming of the gods of the heavens and earth." Many people skip eating meat and enjoy lots of fruits and veggies because it is believed that this will ensure long and happy lives for them.

**Day 2:** On the second day, the Chinese pay respects to their ancestors. They are also extra kind to dogs and feed them well, as it is believed that the second day is the birthday of all dogs. Wouldn't it be fun to throw Fido a birthday party today? Woof!

**Day 3 and 4:** On these days, sons-in-law pay respect to their parents-in-law.

**Day 5:** The fifth day is called Po Woo. On that day people stay home to welcome the God of Wealth. No one visits families and friends on the fifth day because it is said to bring both parties bad luck.

**Day 6 through 10:** The Chinese visit their relatives and friends freely. They also visit their temple to pray for good fortune and health.

**Day 7:** Farmers display their produce on this day. The seventh day is also considered the birthday of human beings. Noodles are eaten to promote longevity and raw fish for success.

**Day 8:** Many families have a reunion dinner, and at midnight they pray to Tian Gong, the God of Heaven. This is a great time for a dinner party and an evening of karaoke.

**Day 9:** Incense is burned and food offerings are made to the Jade Emperor, the ruler of Heaven.

**Day 10 through 12:** Invite your friends and relatives to dinner. More karaoke! More movies! More fun!

**Day 13:** After so much rich food, on the thirteenth day it is advised to eat simply to cleanse the system.

**Day 14:** This day should be for preparations to celebrate the Lantern Festival, which is held on the fifteenth night.

**Day 15:** The Lantern Festival is celebrated and New Year festivities are done. Now get back to work.

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